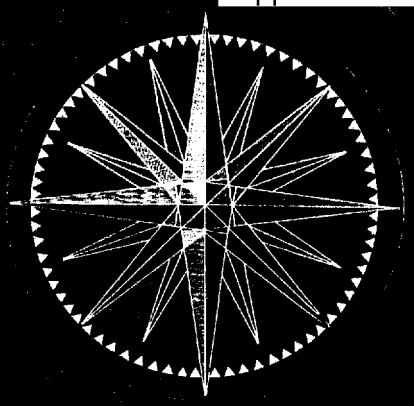

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SPECIAL REPORT

OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

FROL KOZLOV'S STATUS IN THE SOVIET HIERARCHY

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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19 April 1963

FROL KOZLOV'S STATUS IN THE SOVIET HIERARCHY

Party secretary Frol Kozlov is the subject of many of the rumors of discord and impending changes in the top Soviet leadership currently circulating in Moscow. Some allege that there are unspecified disagreements between him and Khrushchev, while others assert that Khrushchev plans soon to transfer the leadership of the party or government to Kozlov. Some Western diplomats in Moscow see proof of the latter theory in recent efforts by the Soviet press to underscore Kozlov's prominence. Others see the special propaganda treatment of Khrushchev and Kozlov together as a device to counter speculation that they are at odds.

Evidence of Number-Two Status

In the spring of 1959 Khrushchev stated unequivocally to Ambassador Harriman that he and Mikoyan had picked Kozlov to succeed him. Kozlov was, at that time, merely one of the two USSR first deputy premiers, but subsequent events confirmed Khrushchev's intention of grooming him as his political heir.

In January 1960 Khrushchev's second secretary and ranking lieutenant, Aleksey Kirichenko, was demoted, and in May Kozlov was brought into the secretariat--the locus of political power in the Soviet Union. At the 22nd party congress in October 1961 Kozlov's position as second-in-command was formally and publicly acknowledged. He was the only presidium member other than Khrushchev to deliver a major address, and in the published listing of the newly elected secretariat, his name appeared out of alphabetical order, directly after that of Khrushchev.

While Kozlov's position has not since been so clearly spelled out (the full secretariat is listed as such only at the time of its election at a party congress), he has on all occasions been accorded the protocol ranking of Khrushchev's first deputy in the party. Although there have been periods when other signs suggested that Kozlov was in some trouble, he has continued, when present, to

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introduce Khrushchev at party functions and to fill in for Khrushchev during his absences.

Supervision of party personnel matters has traditionally been one of the principal responsibilities of a second secretary, and Kozlov has been deeply involved--particularly in Central Asian cadres matters--in recent months. In December he presided over the removal of the top party leaders of the Kazakh Republic and from there went to Tashkent to attend the first meeting of the party's newly created bureau for the Central Asian republics. In February he was again in Kazakhstan, supervising the ouster of the party boss of the Virgin Lands Kray and inspecting the Karaganda heavy industrial complex. On 25 March he returned once more to Central Asia, this time to preside over the removal of the party second secretary and the republic premier in Turkmenia. There is no real precedent in recent years for such heavy concentration by a member of the secretariat--other than Khrushchev--in the affairs of the non-Russian republics.

Lack of Kozlov Men in Key Jobs

There is some evidence, however, which is out of harmony with a picture of Kozlov steadily gaining in power and responsibility. Despite his evident concern with party staffing matters, Kozlov does not seem to have made any significant headway in placing his supporters in strategic positions and, indeed, he seems to have lost some of the ground that he had earlier gained. At the time of his transfer from Leningrad to the central government in early 1958, signs began to appear of an emergent Leningrad network in the upper echelons of the Soviet party--evidence that Kozlov was then able to secure the placement of loyal men who had worked under him. The appointment of Leningrad party boss Spiridonov to the all-union secretariat in October 1961 now seems to have been the high-water mark of this trend. Since then no important Leningraders have been promoted to leading posts and some have been demoted.

The case of Spiridonov is the most outstanding. In April 1962, only months after his elevation to the center, he was abruptly dropped from the secretariat and subsequently, in Khrushchev's presence, from the Leningrad job. At the same time Aleksey Kirilenko, an old

KIRILENKO
came back in as...

... SPIRIDONOV
went out.

Khrushchev retainer who had been dropped as a candidate member of the presidium the preceding November, was brought back as a full member and first deputy chairman of the party bureau for the Russian Republic (RSFSR). A total blackout still surrounds Spiridonov's fall, but it was widely interpreted as a serious blow to Kozlov's position.

Other Leningraders who have since fallen into obscurity include N.D. Kazmin, head of the central committee's department of science, schools, and culture for the RSFSR from 1956 to mid-1962, and N. N. Rodionov, who was removed as second secretary in Kazakhstan in December 1962. He lost his job in the wake of a major scandal involving the promotion of a number of corrupt Kazakh nationals to leading positions. Rodionov had been Leningrad city party boss prior to his transfer in January 1960 to this key control point in Kazakhstan.

Kozlov's Health

Another question mark in assessing Kozlov's current status is his health. In April 1961 he suffered what Khrushchev described as "a serious heart attack" and was away from his desk for several months. There is conflicting evidence as to whether he has made a full recovery. Yury Zhukov, former chairman of the USSR Committee for Cultural Relations With Foreign Countries, told [redacted] that Kozlov had recurrent heart trouble and was on his way out.

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On the face of it, Zhukov would appear to be wrong on both accounts. Kozlov has not been out of view for any long stretches other than summer vacations. Ambassador Kohler, after lunching with Kozlov last fall, remarked that he ate heartily, without apparent restrictions, and seemed in excellent health.

Soviet Opinion on Kozlov Status

Another ambiguous factor in Kozlov's position is the gradual change in what Soviet sources have had to say about his status. In mid-1958 and for some time after Khrushchev's remark to Harriman, Soviet officials who were willing to comment on the succession issue were all "talking up" Kozlov as the capable, fast-rising young official most likely to step into Khrushchev's shoes. As he began to assume the offices of real power, however, these comments were heard less frequently and other presidium members were mentioned as more likely contenders.

In the spring of 1962, shortly after Kozlov's display of power at the 22nd congress, a Soviet official remarked that he would not put his money on Kozlov to succeed Khrushchev or, for that matter, on anyone else at that time. Later that summer two Soviet journalists who claimed close contacts with Khrushchev's personal secretariat

expressed the view that, at the moment, Kosygin was the most likely successor to Khrushchev; they insisted that Kozlov was not a top contender.

While too much weight should not be attached to these opinions--which may have been prompted by the Spiridonov affair--they do suggest that the image of Kozlov "the heir apparent" has not taken deep roots among the second levels of Soviet officialdom.

Kozlov's Views on Party Policy

There also seems to be a gradual change in the views of both foreign and Soviet officials on Kozlov's political outlook. The firmness with which he has attached himself to Khrushchev's coattails has made it difficult to determine his true attitudes toward specific policies. In recent months, however, Kozlov seems to have emerged from the shadows a bit, and where once he was described as the "forward-looking young Khrushchev deputy" he now is seen by many observers as the epitome of the unimaginative, inflexible party apparatchik.

Many members of the Soviet cultural intelligentsia, for instance, feel that Kozlov is strongly opposed to any cultural liberalization and that he has consistently supported the conservative faction in literature and the arts. They insist that on several occasions he intervened directly on the side of party-liners. When the liberal literary journal Novy Mir carried a strong attack on Kochetov's novel Obkom Secretary in January 1962, Kozlov reportedly telephoned the editor to protest criticism of Kochetov and to demand that no further attacks on him be allowed. Criticism of the political reliability of Kochetov's novel did in fact end after the Novy Mir review.

Although members of the intelligentsia admittedly lack hard facts, there is some tenuous evidence which tends to bolster their view. For example, comparison of Brezhnev's and Kozlov's December speeches to the Czechoslovak and Italian party congresses respectively revealed divergent emphasis in treatment of the bifurcation of the Soviet party at the November 1962 central committee plenum. Kozlov tended rather bluntly to stress the purely organizational side of the plenum decisions. He assigned the newly formed party-state control committee a role in "exposing and eliminating" shortcomings in the work of "cultural organizations," a task not previously or subsequently mentioned among the duties of the committee. Brezhnev, on the other hand, discussed the plenum in more mellow terms and linked the creation of the control committee to the strengthening of "socialist legality."

Impressions of US Ambassadors

Ambassador Thompson, discussing his impressions of Kozlov in early 1962, stated that in his opinion Kozlov was

Khrushchev's most likely successor and that he represented the party-machine types--the nearest thing to Stalinists still around in the upper levels. Thompson, therefore, felt that Kozlov as party first secretary would likely adopt an orthodox approach, unlike Khrushchev's seeming moves toward "normalization" of the USSR. Thompson further characterized Kozlov as a man of "very limited intellect" in comparison to Kosygin or Brezhnev. He added, however, that Kozlov did not as a result seem necessarily less congenial to Khrushchev. They seemed to be on very good terms.

This assessment is complemented by impressions Ambassador Kohler gained at a lunch in November 1962. On this occasion, Kozlov conducted himself in an "unbuttoned" manner, seemed to bear few marks of refinement and verged on grossness. He gave the impression of great energy and will-power and of being a man who knows what he wants and is interested only in learning how best to get it. He displayed no false modesty about his power; he said at one juncture, with quiet emphasis, "I am Khrushchev's political deputy," and it was apparent that he expected all present to accept this as a statement of plain fact.

Kohler noted, as have other Western observers, Kozlov's highhanded and callous treatment of his subordinates and his tendency to make cutting jibes at their expense. It would appear that while Kozlov is probably regarded with respect and fear he may not be widely liked by second-level Soviet officials.

As the image of Kozlov the "hard-liner" has gained acceptance there has been a growing tendency to see him as the force behind the current cultural crackdown, to place him in the Chinese camp, to see him forcing his views on Khrushchev or fiercely maneuvering to gain the reins of power.

Occasions for Recent Rumors

The rumors concerning Kozlov have been fanned by several incidents in which the Soviet press appears to have made a special point of underscoring his prominence, primarily by showing him alone with Khrushchev in public. Several Moscow newspapers, for example, featured photographs of just Khrushchev and Kozlov at the presidium's 7-8 March meeting with members of the Soviet cultural intelligentsia.

Held to be of greater political significance, however, was the publicized appearance of the two at a routine opera performance on 3 March. No one in Moscow could remember a past announcement that Khrushchev went to the theater with only one of his colleagues. Some in the Western community in Moscow linked it to the current rumor--allegedly originating with a highly placed official on Pravda--that Khrushchev intends to transfer

leadership of the party or government to Kozlov, viewing the night at the opera as part of the preparatory build-up of Kozlov.

Another explanation, and the more compelling one, is that Khrushchev was trying to counter what is apparently a growing belief that he and Kozlov are now badly divided. 25X1

Kozlov and Khrushchev at the 8 March meeting between top Kremlin leaders and members of the Soviet intelligentsia 25X1